

## WHAT REGRETS DO YOU HAVE?

### *Yoshua*

“Did she really say I’m on the guest list? You’re not making a mistake?”

“No.” The man hands Yoshua the sheet with the details on it. “You were asking about the girl the other day, weren’t you?”

Yoshua nods. “Did she say what name I was under?”

“Yes ... yeah, she did.” The man scratches his forehead. “I meant to write it down. Damn it! It was something weird. Wait a minute. It’ll come to me. What’s your name, anyway?”

“Yoshua.”

“Well, it wasn’t that. I would’ve remembered that. It was something odd. Have you messaged each other online? Maybe it’s your username.”

“We haven’t messaged each other.”

The man taps his fingers nervously against an empty glass. “What’s the opposite of something?”

“The opposite of something?” Yoshua echoes. “Nothing?”

The man’s eyes light up, and he smiles. “Blimey! Of course. Got it now: Nobody! She said she was putting Nobody on the guest list.”

### *Sammy*

The sound check starts with a short circuit. The lights above the stage flicker on and then go out. The main fuse has blown. The bloke standing at the mixing desk swears. A minute later, the power is back on. They’ve only got ten minutes. They play the intro to each song. Sammy’s senses are more finely tuned than usual. Like a vigilant animal, able to take in even the faintest sounds, smells and voices. She’s in a good mood. Time flies. Maybe it’s because of the lager. Sammy is standing backstage, listening to the other bands doing their sound checks. For the next hour, she hangs out with other musicians. They’ve all got some good stories ready to tell. They’re all excited. She peers out into the venue. Maybe he won’t even turn up. The guy from the internet café. Shortly before eight, she goes over to the entrance and peeps over the shoulder of the girl at the till. He’s on the guest list. He’s actually turned up! She goes back. Her eyes scan the jam-packed space. The lights are dimmed. She cannot locate him. The compere announces the first act. She disappears backstage. In half an hour, they’re on.

### *Marie*

She is wearing a yellow top. Eight weeks have passed. In a few hours, the countdown will be over. At midnight, Emma will be free. She will have a carefree life ahead of her. Without the burden of the past weighing her down, she can conquer the world. Without the knowledge that she was only born because her own mother made a huge mistake.

Marie goes out onto the balcony and sets the letters alight. She wants to eliminate any traces that lead to Emma. When she is gone, there must be no evidence. She posted the farewell letter to her parents earlier. The letter says that she was in love with someone who doesn’t love her, so she wants to die. That sounds plausible. And it’s true,

in a way. The main thing is they don't launch an investigation. But someone wanting to die due to unrequited love is nothing unusual. In those cases, people generally refer to it as taking your own life.

### *Yoshua*

Yoshua is standing in front of the stage. He tries to calm himself down by thinking, they're not going to do it until tomorrow. He still has enough time. As soon as he knows the exact place, he will alert the police. Just as long as they don't come up with the idea of agreeing things via text message. If they do that, he's screwed. He'll stay up all night. He's got his laptop and his broadband dongle. He will follow Sailor and wait outside her house, in case she decides to go back there one more time. He's standing at the edge of the stage, in the front row. Maybe she will recognise him. After all, she put him on the guest list, so she must remember him. He will speak to her. He absolutely mustn't let on that he knows about her plan. She'll go and warn the others. Then he won't be able to save them all.

### *Sammy*

The first band leave the stage. They get a moderate round of applause. Sammy managed to locate the guy. He is standing on the left, drinking a cola. She'd remembered him as being taller. But that could just be due to the perspective. In less than twenty minutes, she will be able to observe him close up. As soon as the compere explains to the audience once again how the competition works and the next band has finished.

"Excited?" asks Carla.

"Dunno," replies Sammy. "Should we really play the slow number? Are you sure?"

"It's a good song. Either people will get it or they won't. We want to do our thing, don't we?"

"Sure," says Sammy with a smile. "That's what we want. Do you still want to get a new amp?"

"I'm skint right now. Maybe my parents will come up with something for my birthday."

"What would you say to a Fender?"

Carla pokes Sammy in the ribs. "Listen, rich kid. *My* parents aren't loaded."

"You can have mine."

"Yours? What are you on about? Do you want to quit?" Carla picks worriedly at her guitar.

"No way. I wanna get a Marshall. Warmer sound."

"What are you asking for your amp?"

"Dunno. How much can you afford?"

"Eighty. Is eighty okay?"

"A hundred," says Sammy firmly. "It'd cost three times that new."

"Agreed. You drive a hard bargain." Carla raises her eyebrows. "Can I pay in instalments?"

"Sure. And nought per cent APR." They shake hands on it. "You can take it with you straight away."

"When do you want the first cash?"

"Take your time. No rush."

"Thanks."

They hug. The compere announces them.

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### *Nidal*

Nidal is hanging around at the playground. He is on the swings. His feet scrape along the cracked concrete. The full moon is suspended, unconcerned, between the tower blocks. The darkness does little to make this ugly place more bearable. The laptop is resting in Nidal's lap. He can feel the heat from the battery on his thighs. He activates the Wi-Fi connection and gets a list of available networks. There are probably still a lot of people online. Searching. For love, for sex, for friendship. Entertainment and diversion. He logs on. Whisper is not online. Wonder what she's doing right now? And Sailor? What will her final appearance be like? He could take the overground train and be in the *Pipe* in five minutes. The posters are everywhere. Maybe the music could calm him down a bit. He shuts the laptop, puts it in his rucksack and heads off.

#### Sammy

Sammy cannot put her finger on it. What was that? This feeling? The people are applauding. Even the guy from the internet café. He's standing there, smiling at her and clapping his hands. In time. They want an encore. But all she did was sing. Nothing more. She did what she enjoys doing most of all. Strangely, it's not like the other times. No painful emptiness that takes over after the last note. No fear. Maybe that's what it's like when you're ready to die. Maybe everything is easier then. And trusting. Trusting that moment. Trusting the future. She could even fall in love, with this guy, the one who's looking at her so strangely. Even if falling in love is just an illusion. It's nice to know that you could love someone after all, if the right one comes along. She doesn't want to ruin this feeling. She wants to take it with her into eternity. So she leaves the venue through the side door.

#### Nidal

His hands hurt. He is leaning against the bar and clapping. So that's Sailor. He will never forget that voice. So honest, so incredibly honest. He had pictured her differently. No delicate young girl. No flawless face. Rarely has he seen a person who looked so happy. Sailor takes a bow. She places her right hand over her heart. She looks overwhelmed. The audience is cheering. Maybe they could have become friends. In real life. With their real names. Without any lies. But it's too late for that.

#### Marie

Marie has to throw up. For half an hour she has been kneeling in front of the toilet. She feels sick. She has no idea how she is supposed to get through the next few hours. She rinses her mouth out, goes out onto the balcony and stares up at the starry sky. They should have done it at night. Why didn't she raise any objection? She should have just opened her mouth. The others must be unable to sleep as well. She hears her mobile go indoors. Just once. Four bleeps. A text. Surprised, she goes back over to the desk.

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